NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

The gift of the passion for reading

Rich Heffern | Jul. 27, 2009 NCR Today

Robinson Crusoe surprised by a lone footprint on a deserted island. Tom Sawyer lost in the cave with Becky Thatcher. Holmes and Watson afoot on the Baskerville moors. Frodo the Hobbit in the land of Mordor. Pippi Longstocking in the south seas. Mowgli stalking the fearsome tiger, Shere Khan, with Bagheera the panther at his side. The cat in the hat. The pit and the pendulum. The call of the wild. The white whale?s pursuit. Sighting Treasure Island off the bow of the Hispaniola.

All of us who were ever rebuked as children for always having our noses in a book have been to these places, known these unforgettable characters, shared in these larger-than-life experiences. These images from the world?s treasure of imaginative literature have long since passed from the page and into our hearts.

The passion for reading is one of the great gifts. If spirituality is all about recognizing, valuing and honoring the true pleasures of life, then reading good books takes an important place in this quest for a fuller, more fulfilled existence.

Essayist Lance Morrow recalls a difficult time in his life when he was recovering from major heart surgery. He got himself through the arduous convalescence and readjustment by plowing through Shelby Foote?s three-volume history of the Civil War. A woman close to him, he recalls, lost her son by drowning the night of his high school graduation. She endured through the weeks and months after this tragic loss partly by reading and rereading the works of Willa Cather. The calm and clarity of Cather?s prose stabilized the woman and helped her through the darkest days and nights.

Reading can keep us sane and full of heart. Good books put us in touch with other imaginations and intelligences. They are inoculations against cynicism and despair. With a good book under our arm or perched on a nightstand at home, we can probably rest assured we?ll always be ready and able to soak up grace and spirit wherever they are found. Books aren?t very expensive and give us a wonderful return on our investment.

Do you find yourself growing grim about the mouth? Is it a damp and drizzly November in your soul? Pick up a good book.

Source URL (retrieved on *02/14/2016 - 08:46*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/gift-passion-reading